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The Kentucky Warbler

Volume XIII.

SUMMER, 1937

No. 3

Summer—that period of retirement for all birddom between early July and mid-August—may be aptly called the “Resting Time of the Birds.” That is, for most all. Nesting is over, you say, when you start out on your tramps in late summer; but do not be too sure. There is a gorgeous mite—golden yellow with black wings—who might just be starting to nest. It is the Goldfinch who adds the incentive which keeps the ornithologist afield.

Hay and grain fields have turned from green to yellow or tawny. Many are already harvested. The wild, uncultivated pastures are aglow with golden-rod, sprinkled with masses of the beautifully contrasted purple of the “iron” weeds. Bird songs are no longer heard to any great extent. Instead, the air is full of the monotony of “insect music.” But wait. There is the buzzing sound of the Grasshopper Sparrow and the sharp note of the Dickcissel. There is the whistling of the wings of the Mourning Doves as they rocket into the grain fields. Sure, there are still birds to be found.

Then—it is September. August—the month of retirement for the birds—has passed. It is September—the month of restlessness for the birds. You will see them begin to flock among the weeds and shrubs along the roadsides and streams. For many weeks, they have been gathering on the telegraph wires and in the tree tops. You will see the swallows, martins, blackbirds, robins, warblers and shorebirds, as they move into their long southern flights. “There are days in late September,” writes Mr. Dallas Lore Sharp, “when the very air seems to be half of birds, especially toward nightfall, if the sun sets full and clear; birds going over; birds diving and darting about you; birds along the rails and ridge-poles; birds in the grass under your feet; birds everywhere. You should be out among them where you can see them.”

Assuredly, you should be out among them—always. Summer—the “Resting Time of the Birds.” But not the resting time of the bird student.

* * * * *

THE McELROY FARM—SEASON OF 1937

By

GORDON WILSON, Bowling Green, Ky.

The season of 1937 has brought the largest lake and the largest number of species of birds to the McElroy Farm in my entire acquaintance with it. The very heavy rains of January and February caused the underground streams to overflow and cover nearly a thousand acres of farm

land. Numerous other similar places blocked the highways leading to the farm, so that I was unable to visit it until January 30. Since then I have hardly missed a week on my trips, and on some weeks I have had two or three. The fairly dry spring and early summer have caused the lake to disappear more rapidly than it did in 1935, my greatest previous year. The numbers of waterfowl that have been recorded this year exceed in species and individuals all previous records. Fifty-four water and wading birds and three unusual **raptors** constitute my finds at the time of writing this paper, eleven ahead of the whole 1935 season.

I have had the good fortune to share the lake with many of my friends among the ornithologists of Kentucky and Tennessee. Professor L. Y. Lancaster and Professor C. L. Taylor, two of my colleagues, have made several trips with me. Misses Mabel Slack, Evelyn Schneider, Dorothy Peil, Helen Peil, and Frances Anderson and Mrs. Dorothy Madden Hobson spent March 27 and 28 in observation there. Floyd S. Carpenter visited it with me on April 10 and 11. On April 24 Burt Monroe joined Professor Lancaster and me for a tour of the area; the next day Mr. Monroe and I were joined by Dr. George R. Mayfield and Mr. Albert F. Ganier, of Nashville.

Here are the waterfowl in the order in which they were first seen:—

COMMON MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*)

January 30-April 17. Common.

KILLDEER (*Oxyechus vociferus vociferus*)

Always seen. Common.

AMERICAN PINTALL (*Dafila acuta tzitzihua*)

January 30-May 18. Abundant. A crippled female through the summer.

BLACK DUCK (*Anas rubripes subsp.?*)

February 7-April 24. Common. A pair or three individuals through the summer.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Querquedula discors*)

February 7-May 1. Abundant. A half dozen or so through the summer.

COMMON CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis canadensis*)

February 7-April 11. As many as 60 at a time.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana americana*)

February 20-May 18. Abundant. A scattering few through the summer.

LESSER SCAUP DUCK (*Nyroca affinis*)

February 2-May 18. Abundant.

HOODED MERGANSER (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

March 2. Four birds.

REDHEAD (*Nyroca americana*)

March 2-27. Fairly common.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Totanus flavipes*)

March 6-May 26. Common.

OLD-SQUAW (*Clangula hyemalis*)

March 6-April 3. As many as four seen on four trips.

SHOVELLER (*Spatula clypeata*)

March 6-May 18. Common to abundant.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*)

March 6. One. And again on March 15.

- PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Pisobia melanotos*)
March 15-April 25. Common to abundant.
- WILSON'S SNIPPE (*Capella delicata*)
March 15-May 7. Common.
- AMERICAN GOLDEN-EYE (*Glaucionetta clangula americana*)
March 15-April 7. As many as 20 at a time.
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Nettion carolinense*)
March 15-April 24. Common.
- AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica dominica*)
March 15. One.
- RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*)
March 15-30. Eight being the largest number.
- GREATER YELLOW-LEGS (*Totanus melanoleucus*)
March 23-May 1. Common.
- WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (*Melanitta deglandi*)
March 23. One bird.
- CANVAS-BACK (*Nyroca valisineria*)
March 27-April 17. Twenty as the highest number.
- BLUE GOOSE (*Chen caerulescens*)
March 27-May 1. Fifteen on April 17.
- RING-NECKED DUCK (*Nyroca collaris*)
March 27-May 9. Fairly common. I found a female of this species, apparantly unable to fly, on June 22. Also seen June 26 and 30.
- COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer immer*)
March 29-April 25. Eighteen on the first date.
- HOLBOELL'S GREBE (*Colymbus grisgena holboelli*)
March 30. One bird.
- BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Squatarola squatarola*)
March 30. Two birds. May 18. One bird.
- WESTERN WILLET (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus*)
March 30. One bird.
- PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps podiceps*)
March 30-April 25. Rare.
- BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
March 30—through the season, with immature ones in May and June. Four as the largest number.
- WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*)
April 3. Two birds.
- LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus scolopaceus*)
April 7-May 1. Seven as highest number.
- BALDPATE (*Mareca americana*)
April 10. One bird. April 11, ten birds.
- BUFFLE-HEAD (*Charitonetta albeola*)
April 10-17. Two being highest number.
- EASTERN SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria solitaria*)
April 10-May 18 and again after June 17. Fairly common.
- UPLAND PLOVER (*Bartramia longicauda*)
One on April 10 and 11.
- GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias herodias*)
April 11—through season. Rare.
- SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularia*)
April 17—through season. Rare.

- LEAST SANDPIPER (*Pisobia minutilla*)
 April 17-May 22 and again June 13. Common.
- HORNED GREBE (*Colymbus auritus*)
 April 17. Two birds.
- EASTERN GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens virescens*)
 April 24—through the season. Fairly common.
- SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)
 April 25-May 25. As many as 25 at a time.
- COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*)
 May 7. Three birds.
- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*)
 May 7. Four birds.
- SORA (*Porzana carolina*)
 May 9. One bird.
- LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Florida caerulea caerulea*)
 May 18. Two birds.
- BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias nigra surinamensis*)
 May 18-June 13. Two on the first date. One on the last.
- SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Ereunetes pusillus*)
 May 22-26. Fifty as the highest number.
- PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*)
 May 26. Fifteen birds.
- AMERICAN EGRET (*Casmerodius albus egretta*)
 June 13. One bird.
- BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Pisobia bairdi*)
 June 13. One bird.
- KING RAIL (*Rallus elegans elegans*)
 June 13. One bird.
- YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea violacea*)
 June 26. Three birds.
- The following RAPTORES surprised and pleased me:
- SOUTHERN BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus leucocephalus*)
 One on April 10, while Carpenter was with me.
- OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*)
 One on April 24 and 25, while Monroe was with me.
- DUCK HAWK (*Falco peregrinus anatum*)
 One on April 25, while Ganier, Mayfield and Monroe were with me. I saw a Duck Hawk again on June 11.
- (June 30, 1937)

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THE FINEST SHOW ON EARTH

By

BIRD W. RICE, Cynthiana, Ky.

I have a box seat for the finest show on earth. No, it isn't the theatre, a ball game or even a horse race. It's—yes, you have guessed it—the show presented by the birds.

The west window in my bedroom overlooks the garden and here, comfortably seated, with screen and window raised, I can observe the birds without being seen by them, a decided advantage.

Not only during migration does this window attract me but all through the year there is something interesting to see. In winter, I can watch

the birds that visit my feeding station and during the nesting season, I discover many secrets.

This morning (May 2nd), I was awakened, as usual at this time of the year, by a chorus of bird song. Cardinals, Brown Thrashers, Catbirds, Song Sparrows, Tufted Titmice and House Wrens all seemed to be trying to out-do each other. Suddenly during a lull, I heard a song new to me. It sounded a little like a Wood Thrush, yet it most certainly was not. I never did discover the musician's name, but it served to pique my curiosity and get me out of bed and dressed quickly. Seated at my window with binoculars and note book on the sill, I set down the birds as I saw them. The list follows:

Catbird	Robin
Eastern Cardinal	Tufted Titmouse
Brown Thrasher	White-eyed Vireo
Cape May Warbler	Wood Thrush
Olive-backed Thrush	Black-throated Green Warbler
Blue Jay	Mockingbird
Bronzed Grackle	Blackburnian Warbler
House Wren	Nashville Warbler
Yellow Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Starling	Maryland Yellow-throat
Song Sparrow	Crested Flycatcher
White-throated Sparrow	Chimney Swift

Not a bad list for one yard in one day!

Just why the Mockingbird decided to pay me a visit today, I do not know. They come to my feeding station all through the winter, but with the first sign of spring, they leave for the country, I suppose, without so much as a song for their board.

I saw the White-throated Sparrows in our garden this Spring on April 16th. I expect each day to find they have gone on north and am delighted that they are lingering for a while.

The Maryland Yellow-throats have been around since April 18th, and not a day passes that I do not hear "witchity, witchity," even if I do not always see the little black-masked bird.

The Wood Thrush arrived April 21st, and the Olive-backed Thrush April 30th. Of course, the Hermit Thrush stopped with us earlier.

So far, I have not seen a Yellow-breasted Chat. They usually come with the Yellow-throats.

During the past ten days, other feathered visitors to the garden have been:

Kentucky Warbler	Black and White Warbler
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Worm-eating Warbler	Magnolia Warbler
Yellow-throated Vireo	American Redstart
Oven-bird	Hooded Warbler
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	

These are busy, happy days for the bird lover and my west window will claim much of my time through the rest of the season.

* * * * *

A DUCK HAWK NEAR BOWLING GREEN, KY.

On April 25, 1937, Prof. Gordon Wilson piloted a group of us to McElroy's pond south of Bowling Green, in order that we might view the assemblage of migratory waterbirds that has made the place famous. Since Prof. Wilson is planning to present his weekly tabulation of these birds in another article, I will mention only what I regarded as the most

interesting bird we found present at this 600-acre 'wet-weather' lake. This was a Duck Hawk (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), an immature, doubtless enroute to some northerly breeding ground but tempted to tarry by the plentiful quarry on every hand. The falcon was first noted by the writer, as he and Burt Monroe were rounding the east end of the lake, as it swung about in the air attracted either by several Blue-winged Teal on the water or by a flock of 50 Lesser Yellowlegs on the shore nearby. An hour later, it appeared at the south end of the lake above a large flock of Coots. Thirty minutes afterward, however, it was located at what appeared to be its real headquarters; a shallow inlet into the lake in which were congregated hundreds of ducks, Coots and shorebirds. When the falcon flew low toward them, the shorebirds would arise in confused, mass flight and the water-fowl would mill about on the surface or dive. We watched the bird for more than half an hour but did not actually see it capture quarry. However, on one occasion it dived through a milling flock of Yellowlegs without capturing a victim. Shortly after, it flew down into an old corn field near us and alit upon a prostrate stalk as though seeking a lowly field mouse for a change in its bill-of-fare. This is a first record for the Bowling Green area. Those in our party were Gordon Wilson and son, Gordon Jr., Burt Monroe, G. R. Mayfield and the writer.

--A. F. GANIER, Nashville, Tenn.

* * * * *

AN INTERESTING WINTER VISITANT ON THE OHIO RIVER

One of the most interesting and spectacular of American birds is the Duck Hawk (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). Few living creatures can surpass him in courage, speed and audacity. It has been the good fortune of Louisville bird students to have the opportunity of close acquaintance with one of these birds. In the fall of 1934, the Duck Hawk was first discovered on the Ohio River by Mr. Floyd Carpenter. The bird has shown a partiality to the neighborhood of Goose Island ever since then, although it has been seen on Six Mile Island and a short distance further up the river. It has returned each year to the same locality. I saw the bird about nine times during the past winter, the first date being November 14, and the last date, March 6. The hawk, if it is the same one, has been in adult plumage since first seen three years ago.

Apparently it likes Goose Island, which is on the Kentucky side about eight miles upstream from the center of Louisville, because of the excellent view from the island and the many gulls and ducks in the vicinity as well as neighboring pigeon roosts. Although I have never seen it capture anything, it has several times been observed while feeding. I once saw a Double-crested Cormorant terribly frightened by the Duck Hawk as the former came to roost at the same spot in which the latter was sitting without seeing the hawk. Not until the Cormorant approached with set wings and outstretched feet did he see the stolid hawk confronting him. That Cormorant made one of the quickest U-turns and fastest departures in Cormorant history.

We hope that the Duck Hawk may be found nesting north of here on the river, although it is highly improbable. Audubon recorded it nesting along Green river and it nests at the present day at Reelfoot Lake. Be that as it may, we do have the Duck Hawk in winter and we hope it returns again next year. Perhaps it will bring a family with it.

--ROBERT MENGEL, Louisville, Ky.

DISTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL BIRDS IN ONE VICINITY

The similarity of individuals of various species makes it virtually impossible for the observer to accurately determine the number of individuals in any given vicinity. Therein lies one of the advantages of banding.

The author lives in the Broadmeade-Strathmoor district in Louisville. The heavy planting of shrubbery and evergreens about the homes and the fact that this area lies on the outskirts of the city, makes it a mecca for bird life.

One species that has found this vicinity perfectly suited to its needs is the Eastern Cardinal (*Richmondia cardinalis cardinalis*). When the writer began his banding station on Thanksgiving Day, 1936, he estimated that he had eight or ten Cardinals feeding at his station. The actual number of individuals banded from the above date to the beginning of the nesting season—approximately May 1, 1937—proves how erroneous such an estimate can be, for the actual number of individuals banded as seventy-five—forty males and thirty-five females.

One would properly wonder where all of these Cardinals came from. The fact is that during the winter the young birds roam over a fairly large area, spending no great amount of time at any one spot. Adults remain, as a general rule, in the area in which they nested during the preceding summer but make no effort to defend their "territory" until the next mating season arrives. From then on, until the nesting season is over, each male has his own territory which he defends against any and all intruders of the same species. Sometimes this territory is only a part of a back yard; again it may include a fairly large area.

Thus far, only two males, No. 36-219413, banded Dec. 6, 1936, and No. 36-219407, banded Dec. 7, 1936, are feeding at the author's station and the banding dates would indicate that they remained in the territory all winter.

With the coming of Fall, the nestlings of this summer will commence their wanderings and although you may imagine that you are seeing the same Cardinal at your feeding station each morning, the chances are that you may be seeing any one of twenty-five or more, one of which—the male whose territory included your home—will remain with you all winter.

—JAMES BOSWELL YOUNG, Louisville, Ky.

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SHORT-EARED OWL AT LOUISVILLE, KY.

The incentive for writing this paper came, when, on talking with Burt Monroe, I found that the Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus flammeus*) was a rare transient and winter resident which he had never recorded himself. This called to mind several incidents which at the time seemed insignificant but suddenly appeared important.

In October, 1933, Short-eared Owls had taken up residence in a grassy meadow not far from Bowman Field, the Louisville Airport. There they were often seen in company with Marsh Hawks. It was unusual to see one, however, without flushing it. In November, two were killed, one of which is in the writer's possession. On the following day, a flock of nine was flushed at one time. The group circled higher and higher in the late afternoon sky, with their peculiar batlike flight, and finally disappeared in the gathering darkness. Two more owls from this flock were later killed by a hunter and sent to Eugene Wenz, who still has them, for mounting.

A cold, rainy day in late Fall found the author near Buechel, Ky. A strange shape in a tree turned out to be a Short-eared Owl, perched

about thirty feet up, which, in itself, is rather unusual since this owl is rather terrestrial in habits. This record was on November 21, 1936.

—ROBERT MENGEL, Louisville, Ky.

* * * * *

NESTING OF THE EASTERN HOUSE WREN AT LOUISVILLE, KY.

The subject of much controversy in the state in recent years has been that small, brown mite, the Eastern House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*). It has been claimed by some, and perhaps correctly, that the House Wren formerly did not nest at all in Kentucky. Apparently, according to Brasher Bacon, this Wren absolutely does not nest at Madisonville, Hopkins County, Ky., and Carlisle Chamberlain says that it does not nest in Oldham County, the Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewicki bewicki*) being the "house" wren there.

In view of this, I would like to cite records in my knowledge of the House Wren's nesting at Louisville. The only wren I remember in my childhood is the House Wren and it was not until four years ago that I made the acquaintance of the Bewick's Wren. The House Wren nested on our place in Village Drive for several years. At least five nests were definitely identified and a set of six eggs, now in the collection of Burt Monroe, was taken. Not only did the Wrens nest there, but built in boxes nailed twenty feet up on the back of the house. I also have fragments of egg shells from several other abandoned nests. Miss Mabel Slack tells me that House Wrens have raised broods in her yard for two years, and now are nesting further down the street.

Summing my records up, I find the House Wren has nested at the following places: Village Drive, Louisville, 1931-1932-1933-1934; Murray Avenue, 1937; Alta Avenue, 1936-1937; Everett Avenue, 1935-1936-1937; Mockingbird Valley, 1937; Buechel, Ky., 1937; Glenview, Ky., 1937. During all the period I have not found the Bewick's Wren nesting closer to Louisville than Buechel, where both species were found nesting.

It would seem then that the Bewick's Wren prefers farms and small towns as nesting situations while the House Wren is more a bird of the city suburbs, although not confined to it altogether. Any further evidence on this subject would be appreciated, and it is suggested that members throughout Kentucky cooperate in this study.

—ROBERT MENGEL, Louisville, Ky.

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Organized April, 1923

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